Ford Meets With Olsons, Apologizes

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United Press International

President Ford met privately yesterday with the family of Dr. Frank Olson and apologized on behalf of the government for the scientist's suicide after he was secretly given LSD by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Press secretary Ron Nessen said Mr. Ford met in the Oval Office for 17 minutes with Olson's widow, Alice, and her three children, Lisa Olson Hayward, Nils Olson and Eric Olson.

The President expressed "the sympathy of the American people and apologized on behalf of the U. S. government for the circumstances of Dr. Frank Olson's death in November, 1953," Nessen said.

Olson fell to his death from a New York hotel room. The Rockefeller commission, which investigated the CIA, said he was fed LSD without his knowledge in an experiment and this led to his death.

Mr. Ford invited the Olson family to the White House and Nessen said the victim's family asked to be told all the facts concerning his death.

The President told the family he had instructed the legal counsel's office "to make information available to them at the earliest possible date," Nessen said.

He said Mr. Ford also informed the Olson's that Attorney General Edward H. Levi has been asked to meet with their legal representatives to discuss claims they wish to make against the CIA.

The family is considering suing the federal government.

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Nessen said reporters and photographers were barred from the meeting at the request of the family.

Nessen told reporters the President "feels very strongly about this and that's how this meeting came about."

He said Mr. Ford "felt he wanted to apologize personally" to the Olsons.

The White House took the unusual step of issuing on behalf of the Olson family a statement of appreciation to Mr. Ford and a warning against future abuses by the CIA.

The White House said the Olson family asked that the following statement be released:

"We deely appreciate President Ford's expression of sympathy and apology to our family. His concern and invitation to meet with him are of great value to us.

"Frank Olson's death was a tragic loss to his family, his friends, and his scientific colleagues. As previously unknown circumstances of his death have been revealed, the American people have been deeply moved. We are heartened by this response and encouraged that this experience has provided an impetus in this country for reflection on fundamental issues important to us all as a free people.

"We are grateful that President Ford has given us his support for our effort to be fully informed about Frank Olson's death and to obtain a just solution of this entire matter. We hope that this will be part of a continuing effort to ensure that the CIA is accountable for its actions and that people in all parts of the world are safe from abuses of power by American intelligence agencies."